

Braille Monitor



APRIL, 1980

VOICE OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

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THE BRAILLE MONITOR

PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

APRIL 1980

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THE BRAILLE MONITOR

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ON THE BARRICADES AT THE EVANSVILLE ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

by TOM BOZIKIS

NOTE: (The September, 1979, MONITOR, contained an article by Tom Bozikis regarding problems with the Evansville Association for the Blind. The blind of Indiana continue and move forward as the following article reveals.)

October 9 was a cold evening in Evansville, but a dozen strong-willed, warm-blooded Federationists participated in the demonstration which lasted almost three hours.

BLIND TO PICKET BANQUET

(Reprinted from the *EVANSVILLE PRESS*
of October 6, 1979, by permission)

About a dozen members of the National Federation of the Blind will be picketing at the Executive Inn Tuesday night when a rival organization, the Evansville Association of the Blind, holds its annual recognition banquet.

Tom Bozikis, first vice president of the state federation, said the pickets will be carrying signs reading "EAB Hurts the Blind" and "EAB Ignores the Blind."

One of the issues, he said, is that no member of the federation—what he terms "the organized blind community"—is on the association's board. Bozikis' wife, Rhonda, had been on the board before her involvement in the federation but no longer is.

Frank Kern, executive director of the association, said that Mrs. Bozikis was not asked to serve another term because of her frequent absences from board meetings. He said her connection with the federation was not a factor.

The association does not have any members. Instead, the board itself names and elects persons to serve on the board.

At the banquet, retiring members of the board are honored, Kern said, and special awards to others in the community are announced.

The picketing is the latest in a long-running dispute between the federation and association, a dispute carried on both locally and nationally.

A major issue is the operation of the workshops the association conduct throughout the nation. Many workers earn less than the minimum wage. The federation contends that every worker should make at least the minimum wage with additional increases for ability and experience.

The association, on the other hand, says that many blind workers in the workshop programs would be unable to get any kind of job outside the association and do not have the sufficient ability to allow a minimum wage to be paid.

The demonstration took place on October 9, as planned. What we have gained is that the community recognizes the National Federation of the Blind as the legitimate voice of the blind. The community now better understands the problems we face with this agency and that our demands are just.

While their colleagues marched outside the building, Mrs. Rhonda Bozikis (an NFB member and past board member of the Evansville Association for the Blind) and Mr. Dick Culley (NFB of Indiana second vice president) attended the dinner on the

inside. Prime rib was on the menu and a cold shoulder for Mr. Culley and Mrs. Bozikis as well.

Conversation between Mr. Culley and Mr. Frank Kern, Executive Director of the EAB, reveals once again the problems:

Mr. Culley spoke with Mr. Kern about policies at the EAB and asked why it is that when workers become proficient at a certain job, they are taken off that job. Mr. Kern denied that this is the case and required one of his managers to confirm his statement. But blind people in Evansville know that it *does* happen.

Mr. Culley asked Mr. Kern to support the NFB position that production employees in workshops for the blind should be paid the federal minimum wage. Mr. Kern refused. Mr. Culley next asked Mr. Kern why the EAB wishes to be accredited by NAC, since NAC continues to promote services and policies that hurt blind people. Mr. Kern said that he had just written a letter of support for NAC and suggested that NAC accredit

other rehabilitation services in addition to those for the blind. Federationists are no longer surprised—only disappointed—when officials of agencies of the AFB/ACB/NAC/ ALL combine respond so unresponsively.

The new president of the board of the EAB (hand-picked, as usual, by Frank Kern) is Mr. Charles Goldman, Vice-President of the National City Bank. Mr. Goldman demonstrated that his attitudes are in keeping with EAB's past. He tells us first that blind people are a cross-section of society with a wide range of abilities and aptitudes. But he goes on to say that the EAB cannot afford to pay the federal minimum wage to its blind employees.

The Evansville Association for the Blind *will* respond to the needs and wishes of the blind. The blind of the country and the citizens of Evansville will insist on it. Whether they like it or not the board and the staff of the EAB heard what we had to say to them on October 9, and whether they like it or not, they must respond.

REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER ON BLINDNESS

by HAL BLEAKLEY

The 1978 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 created The National Institute of Handicapped Research in the Office of Human Development Services of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Basically it is a spin-off of the research activities that were undertaken under the Rehabilitation Services Administration. However, the Act establishes the National Institute of Handicapped Research (NIHR) as an entity separate from the Rehabilitation Services Administration, with a director to be appointed by the President.

The mission of NIHR is to establish re-

search in all areas of handicapping conditions. The research activities of the Rehabilitation Services Administration had to be focused primarily on persons of employment age. But the mandate of NIHR goes far beyond this. For all practical purposes, the mandate of NIHR extends from the cradle to the grave without the necessity to relate the research only to employment. One of the prime missions of NIHR is to coordinate all the research that goes on within the Federal government and that pertains to handicapped individuals.

NIHR will move over into the newly

created Department of Education. The plan in the Department of Education is to establish an assistant secretary for special education and rehabilitation. There will be a director in charge of special education, a director in charge of rehabilitation services and a director in charge of NIHR, all responsible to the assistant secretary.

Beginning in 1963, one of the research activities of the Rehabilitation Services Administration was the establishment of research and training centers. As a result of the 1978 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, which created NIHR, these research and training centers have been moved out of the Rehabilitation Services Administration and placed under NIHR.

Prior to this year, there were nineteen research and training centers across the country—eleven of them are in the area of medical rehabilitation; three concern themselves primarily with vocational rehabilitation; three are involved with mental retardation; two operate in the area of deafness. Two new research and training centers have just been established. One is for the rehabilitation of the mentally ill, and—finally, after all these years—on June 1, 1979, was established the Research and Training Center on Blindness.

Administratively the Research and Training Center on Blindness is located at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Cooperative agreements have been developed between the Center and Duke University and North Carolina State University. This means that research projects are actually being carried out by the University of North Carolina, Duke and North Carolina State University. NIHR requires that a research and training center be highly visible within the university setting in order to keep it from being buried inside the structure of a school of social work, education, engineering, or any other subdivision

of the university. This obligated the University of North Carolina, in fact, to create a new, autonomous department within the university. In September, 1979 a charter was issued to the Research and Training Center on Blindness by the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina, retroactive to June 1, 1979. The director of the Research and Training Center on Blindness reports directly to the Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs of the University of North Carolina.

NIHR awarded funds to the Research and Training Center on Blindness for a period of five years, subject to the Center's carrying out its responsibilities and the availability of funds. The history of the establishment of research and training centers indicates that when a center does the job it should, funding becomes ongoing. The Research and Training Center on Blindness received a first year grant of \$300,000, which seems to be traditional. Several of the more established research and training centers now receive grants of \$1,500,000 annually. Each center must submit, annually, an application for continuation, together with a budget for the next years operation.

One of the most important facts to persons who happen to be blind is the purpose for which research and training centers are established. There are all kinds of research. Important as it may be to some scientists in our society, I don't believe we are really interested in, or can benefit from a research project that investigates the location of the hearing organ in a blind frog. But, unfortunately, this is the end result of too many research projects that waste thousands of dollars of public and private funds. Therefore, the question of what research projects the center undertakes is most important. They can do nothing that means anything in the improvement of the quality of life of

blind persons, or, they can be a mighty force in the struggle of blind persons for first class citizenship.

All research and training centers, including the Research and Training Center on Blindness, are required to have an advisory council composed of members who represent a cross section of the various interests in that particular field. Since there is only one research and training center on blindness, the advisory council for this center is a "national advisory council".

The National Advisory Council of the Research and Training Center on Blindness had its first meeting in Chapel Hill, North Carolina on Monday and Tuesday, December 3 and 4, 1979. The members of the National Advisory Council are representatives from: National Federation of the Blind, American Council of the Blind, the American Association of Workers For the Blind, the American Foundation For the Blind, Lions International, American Printing House For the Blind, Smith-Kettlewell Institute of Visual Sciences, the National Eye Institute, Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped, National Council of State Agencies for the Blind and the Administration on Aging. In addition, ex-officio members are: Bureau for the Blind and Visually Handicapped, National Institute for Handicapped Research, Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare Regional Office IV, Office of Human Development Services, Dept. of Ophthalmology of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Rehabilitation Counselling Program of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind and the Research and Training Center Local Board. The Research and Training Center Local Board is responsible for maintaining University of North Carolina policy in the operation of the Center.

Dr. Thomas Baldwin, Director of the Re-

search and Training Center on Blindness, informed the members of the National Advisory Council that the mission of the Research and Training Center (R&T Center) is to improve methods of rehabilitation and service delivery in order to alleviate or stabilize handicapping conditions for the particular group that the Center is designed to serve. The training component of the Center is primarily, but not exclusively, a research dissemination component as contrasted with a degree granting operation. In addition to research dissemination, the training component is supposed to be able to get results of research, both within the Center and research that might be going on in other places, into the field and incorporated into practice as soon as possible. Other objectives are to increase the number of rehabilitation personnel where shortages exist, to train rehabilitation research and service personnel, incorporate rehabilitation information concerning blind persons into all undergraduate and graduate rehabilitation and special education curricula and improve the skills of students, professionals, administrators and consumers interested in work with the blind.

Dr. Joseph Fenton, Special Assistant to the Director of NIHR for Special Centers, Inter-governmental Relationships and Inter-agency Relationships, was present throughout the National Advisory Council meeting. Dr. Fenton stated that the basic concept of the Research and Training Center program is the development of new knowledge that will make a contribution to the rehabilitation of handicapped individuals (in this case persons who are blind or who have severe visual impairment) and the dissemination of that new knowledge and the promotion of its utilization. He stated that this is one of the few programs in government that has both the responsibility for the development of new knowledge as well as the

responsibility for dissemination and promotion of utilization of the knowledge. He said, "In the organization of the Centers we are concerned that the Centers have a very practical approach to their research, that the research is applicable and has some near-term relevance to the problems that exist among handicapped individuals. While the new legislation does indicate that the research may be both applied and basic, the term 'basic' in this research indicates that, although it is 'basic', it must show some application to the rehabilitation of individuals. Our concern primarily is that the problems that are there, need to be solved, and are evident, are the ones that should be worked on and considered priorities."

Dr. Fenton went on to say, "In order to assure ourselves (meaning NIHR) that this is the direction, we have asked each of the R&T Centers to establish an advisory council to the Center."

Dr. Fenton indicated that one of the major roles of the National Advisory Council of the R&T Center on Blindness is to provide input to the Center and to NIHR concerning research and training needs that exist and that should lead to programs at the Center that are relevant, in line with priorities and specifically directed toward the alleviation of disability, reduction of dependency, more effective and efficient integrated comprehensive rehabilitation delivery systems and training which will increase the quality and quantity of rehabilitation personnel and wide dissemination and promotion of the utilization of the new knowledge. He also stated that the Advisory Council should assure itself that the research projects are relevant to the goals and objectives of rehabilitation and that they are meeting priority issues and that there is a utilization plan for each of the projects undertaken.

With respect to the training component,

Dr. Fenton said that the term "training" is being used in a very broad sense. Not only does it include dissemination of the new knowledge and promotion of the utilization of the knowledge, but it also includes having rehabilitation information and knowledge imparted to all aspects of university curricula that have some relationship to the problem. It also includes the development of manpower to meet shortages and increasing and improving the skills of existing rehabilitation staff.

There were eight major items discussed at the Advisory Council meeting: history of the establishment of the R&T Center on Blindness (discussed above); the role of the National Advisory Council (discussed above); the function of the Center (discussed above); core areas (research projects); the training component of the program; the long range, five year plan; budget and proposal for next fiscal year and the organization of the National Advisory Council.

CORE AREAS

The request for proposal sent out by the Federal government to universities, who were interested in funding for this program, included a requirement that they select at least two core areas of research. The University of North Carolina selected three core areas.

For core area I—Application of advanced technology—Dr. William Ballenger is the principal investigator. North Carolina State University is responsible for this research project.

Dr. Ballenger opened his presentation of this core area by stating, "I took from the proposal itself a number of issues in this core area, which is dealing with the utilization of technology. The major statement that you made was to conduct research relevant to the utilization of advanced method-

ology and technology in the general field of rehabilitation of the blind and visually disabled, looking at technology as technical aids and devices as well as the methodology for how they are used. I would also like to expand technology to include instructional technology, that is, those packages of instruction, etc., using not only technology but other methods and techniques, etc., for operating in the sighted world, where technology may not be involved but some procedural training may be involved. Further we propose to develop a systematic approach to job modification and development within the man/machine system".

"Further, we want to identify advanced technological developments that can be applied to the achievement of task activities. Here we are looking at all kinds of tasks in the world, whether it be in the office, manufacturing plant, kitchen or on the street, there are a variety of applications that we need to look at as far as uni-functions of the world. We want to develop guidelines for working with employers of the blind and visually disabled. If we're going to achieve employment, we need to look at the other side of the employee-employment relationship, where we need to solve the problems of the employer. When we can solve their problems, we will solve the problems of the employee, that is, in this case, the visually impaired employee. We want to develop guidelines for providing training and professional development of rehabilitation personnel working with job development, job placement and daily activities. And where we take this knowledge, technology, training, methodology, etc., that we work with and figure out how to build it into the training program for those professional practitioners. We want to develop a classification system for information exchange. That is look at systematically what the visual functions are in a way

that we can ultimately assess their vision or find some alternative for necessary information exchanges that go along in conducting daily activities. And then, last, systematically study clusters of jobs based upon parameters of visual functions following the traditional approach of job clusters that has been done in other cases. Here we want to try to look at jobs as they relate to those components of vision so that when we solve a problem in one job we can look at what family of jobs it belongs to. We can cluster these things and we can then have, by definition, solved a multitude of problems. This comes about if you look at the dictionary of occupational titles showing the thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs. Rather than approach each job as unique, try to solve it, what we would like to do is look at the commonality of those jobs and say, if they can do this job, then, they can do that one, based on the premise that the visual functions are similar. So if we can define the visual functions and visual tasks that might be in cluster in a large number of jobs, we can say we've solved the problem in many jobs. So, basically those are the major premises we started out with from our initial proposal."

Dr. Ballenger stated that the approach to the research project would be through the development of a taxonomy of visual functions and a taxonomy of visual tasks. The two would then be matched. If they did not match, then the alternatives would be examined. He sees three alternatives: first, the development of technology; second, training; third, the elimination of that particular visual task.

Dr. Ballenger's concept is that, having defined the visual functions and the visual tasks, the rehabilitation counsellor can then go to the body of knowledge that exists today with regard to training and technology

to find the solution to the employment problem of the blind individual. If the solution does not exist now, this would point the way to further research.

Note: The dictionary defines "taxonomy" as the science, laws or principles of classification.

In response to a question, Dr. Ballenger said that the final product of the research would be two documents: a taxonomy of visual functions and a taxonomy of visual tasks. It was pointed out by members of the Advisory Council that generalizing a visual task from one job to another is not difficult. The difficulty develops when we say that, because a job has been done successfully by one blind person, it can, therefore, automatically be done successfully by another blind person. It was also pointed out that when we start working with a list of job titles that blind people can handle successfully, these jobs tend to become stereotyped. It was strongly recommended by various members of the Council that the result of previous work that had been done in this area should be collected and studied. Also, the point was made that we should not look to technology to solve the employment problems of blind persons, when in reality the basic problem is social attitudes toward blindness and, therefore, toward individuals who happen to be blind.

Dr. Ballenger said that this fiscal year he hoped to get the taxonomic structures put together. He also said they hoped to get into job modification this fiscal year, particularly with reference to methods of readout on various jobs.

Two other major points were made by members of the Advisory Council concerning this core area. First, that perhaps Dr. Ballenger should be looking at the overall task to be done, rather than the visual components of the task—thinking in terms of the desired end result of the job to be done,

rather than exactly how that end result is achieved. Second, the highly individualized nature of visual disability was stressed.

For core area II—job identification and selective placement—Dr. Jane Pfouts is the principal investigator and the University of North Carolina is handling this research project. This core area has two major components—a psychological component and a sociological component.

With regard to the psychological component, Dr. Baldwin stated, in the absence of Dr. Pfouts, "In the field of working with the handicapped in general, and the blind in particular, there has been a great deal of emphasis on the use of psychological tests for predicting success in job performance. Unfortunately, more often than not, these tests are used without the adequate validation that's considered to be essential by psychologists for actually making decisions about what kind of a field a person should go into. We have a number of tests, many of them called 'work samples' on the market today. There are some of the standard tests which have been modified for use with the blind. These certainly are readily available and are in widespread use. But, when it gets into the field of knowing whether or not these tests really have validity, or any value in predicting how successful a person will be on one job vs. another one, we have virtually no really hard information."

The psychological component of this research project will investigate the validity of psychological tests used with blind persons, with emphasis on tests used to predict success on the job. Dr. Baldwin, Director of the Center, said that one of the major difficulties with this project was finding a large enough number of blind persons working on the same job to provide an adequate sample for study. In response to a question, Dr. Baldwin said that they plan

to study only *blind* persons on a given job, not also *sighted* persons on that same job. The suggestion was made to Dr. Baldwin that he might first determine whether the test was *valid* for the job itself by testing *sighted* workers. Dr. Baldwin did not seem to feel that this could be done. It was also pointed out to Dr. Baldwin that a blind worker on a particular job in competitive industry could show a totally different level of performance than that same worker on the same job in a sheltered workshop.

Dr. Ballenger also presented the description of the sociological component of this core area. This component will investigate social support systems as they relate to the independent functioning of blind persons. The sample consists of 96 persons, randomly selected, age range 21 to 56, none of whom have usable vision. Each of these subjects has gone through an interview lasting about 1½ hours.

The "social network" of each individual is studied to determine the relationship between the network and the level of independent functioning of the individual. A "social network" is that group of members of the family, friends, church members, co-workers, etc. on whom the individual relies for support in life situations. Level of independent functioning is measured by employment, degree of mobility, degree of personal care and degree of independence in performing household tasks. The hypothesis is that the greater the degree of social support, the higher the level of independence. The 96 people involved in this component are not the same people being studied in the psychological component of the same core area.

For core area III—Maximum use of residual vision—Dr. Myron Wolbart of Duke University, is the principal investigator. This research project will concern itself with a study of glare sensitivity. The at-

tempt is to quantify the disability that results from glare sensitivity. According to Dr. Wolbart, the major benefit from the research would be that knowledge will be developed that will show how a job needed to be modified to permit a person with glare sensitivity to use residual vision to the maximum. A simple machine has been designed by the researchers to conduct this study.

Dr. Wolbart stated that he was going to try to set up the work so that the information could be used in conjunction with Dr. Ballenger's project, which seeks, as a near-term goal, to produce a taxonomy of visual functions and a taxonomy of visual tasks.

Dr. Wolbart acknowledged that when he entered this program he was not aware of the basic problems relating to blindness. He said that he believed that every person needed to help themselves and that "technology is just supplied to enlarge the capabilities of what they can do. It's still on an individual basis".

In response to a question, Dr. Wolbart stated that most of the people who were working with him were graduate and undergraduate students in a variety of fields. He said that in addition he is working very closely with state services for the blind and the evaluation unit.

Dr. Wolbart's background is in biophysics.

A recommendation was made that an optometrist, with special background in low vision, should be added to the membership of the Council. The motion was carried.

The membership of the Advisory Council expressed serious concerns about the three core areas that have been selected.

First, they seem to feel that none of the research projects selected represented high priority problems for investigation. Second, most of the members of the Council had difficulty understanding exactly what

the researchers were doing. Third, the Council had difficulty with the practical application of the results of the research. In view of Dr. Fenton's admonition that research needed to have near-term application in the rehabilitation of blind persons, this was a most serious concern of the Council. Fourth, there were repeated recommendations from the Council that the staff of the Center should obtain and study the literature that had already been developed in each of the core areas in order to prevent re-inventing the wheel. Fifth, there was a feeling among the members of the Council that the Center was not using the services of researchers whose stature could contribute merit and credibility to the work of the Center. Sixth, the staff of the Center needed to acquaint itself much more intimately with the problems of blindness.

Dr. Baldwin, at various points throughout the meeting, responded to the concerns raised by the Council by saying that: the time allowed for response to the request for a proposal was short; the projects that were selected were, in some way, already underway; one of the major considerations in the selection of the projects was the resources of the three universities involved. While the explanation seemed to be understood by the Council, the apology did not change the thinking of the Council concerning what should be done. The questions raised by the Council remained largely unanswered.

TRAINING COMPONENT

Dr. Nathaniel Fullwood, Director of Training for the Center, presented the description of the training component. He raised the basic question of whether the training component of the Center should be largely responsible for disseminating the results of research or whether it should be the leading edge of the Center's activity. He

said he had prepared a proposed training plan which was in draft form. Dr. Baldwin said he had not as yet gone over this plan with Dr. Fullwood.

Dr. Fullwood said that a series of training workshops was being planned. One of the objectives is the dissemination of rehabilitation information. A second objective is the dissemination of research results. He said that a third objective was the development of a continuing education program in which persons can enroll for short term courses in North Carolina and other universities. Fourth, he indicated the development of training programs that lead to a degree in rehabilitation of the blind.

During the first year, the workshops will deal mainly with information dissemination and research dissemination. One workshop will deal with applied technology; another will deal with legislation and public policy; a third will cover job identification and selective placement and a fourth workshop will be held, as yet not clearly defined.

A number of members of the Council commented on the training plan. There was a general consensus that the plan for the first year was overly ambitious and too diffuse. Also, several members urged that the Center address itself to some of the large, unmet training needs in work with the blind, pointing out that a lot of the current training is mediocre and that there are many gaps. The staff was also urged to consider that one of the mandates regarding the Center's mission is to assess manpower needs in the rehabilitation of blind persons.

LONG RANGE PLAN

The Council was informed by Dr. Fenton that NIH is required to present to Congress by May 1, 1980, a five year plan for the work of the R&T Centers across the country. He said that, at this moment,

there is a meeting going on in Denver, convened by NIHR, to develop the format for this plan. He felt that one of the most important tasks of the Council, for its immediate attention, is the development of the content of the five year plan for the R&T Center on Blindness. He said that this plan should deal with research and training needs and establish them in order of priority. The plan will have to be in Washington by April 1, 1980. The chairman appointed a long range planning committee to begin work on this matter at once.

PROPOSAL FOR NEXT FISCAL YEAR

It also became evident that work needed to be done soon on the preparation of a proposed program and budget for the year beginning June 1, 1980. Since the five year plan will include the plan for next year, the

long range planning committee will also work on the program for next year.

ORGANIZATION OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Council elected two officers. Dr. Marvin Berkowitz, Associate Director of the American Foundation For the Blind was elected chairman of the Council and Hal Bleakley, representing the National Federation of the Blind, was elected vice chairman.

Because of the concern that the Council has with the present program of the Center and because of the deadlines for submission of the five year plan and plan and budget for next year, it was decided that the Council needed to meet again early in February. February 4 and 5 were selected. January 17 and 18 have been selected as tentative dates for a meeting of the long range planning committee in Washington, D.C.

THE OLD STEREOTYPE WITH A NEW TWIST

by PAUL BURKHARDT

I am one of those Federationists that most of you don't know, but it's time you heard from me. Here is something that not only concerns me but affects us all.

I wonder how many of you have ever listened to the syndicated program called "American Top Forty." Well, for those of you who don't know, this four-hour show, sometimes shortened to AT40, is hosted by Casey Kassim from Hollywood. Each weekend, Casey counts down the 40 most popular single records of the week, according to the Hot 100 surveys of Billboard Magazine. During this countdown, Casey reads interesting stories about the backgrounds of the popular artists who make these rock songs and albums what they are.

While riding on a bus from Fitchburg, Massachusetts to Boston last June 23, I was listening to the American Top 40 and heard a story about Stevie Wonder. As you know, Stevie Wonder is not only one of the so-called "superstars" but he is also blind. Since I was not able to record what was being said, I wrote to American Top 40 and asked Casey to send me that story (incidentally, the address is: American Top 40, P.O. Box 8170, Universal City, California 91608.)

I now have the article. We must keep in mind that Casey Kassim did not write it. I am sure he gets what he reads from others, who help the program run smoothly; but I feel strongly that Stevie Wonder's feeling

the faces of the group called the Emotions to determine their expressions and to get to know them better is simply not what the normal blind person would do. In fact, I know a great many blind people, and I have yet to meet one who has felt other people's faces to see what they look like. For that matter, maybe it was all just made up and Stevie Wonder didn't do it either.

Whether Stevie Wonder felt the faces or not (and whether, if he did, it was done for publicity or simply because he is not like other normal blind people) I don't know; but the American Top 40 is broadcast world-wide, and I think this story about Stevie Wonder reinforces the stereotype and does damage to all of us. You would think that a person like Stevie Wonder would see the wisdom of joining our movement, and for all I know, maybe he has. Here is a quote from Casey Kassim on his world-wide broadcast last June 23:

"Here is the story that was told to us by the quartet of sisters, The Emotions, about the night Stevie Wonder made them cry. Several years ago, in Baltimore, they were the supporting act in a concert headlined by Stevie. But they hadn't met him yet. And it was a very anxious time for them because here they were, opening a show for a superstar they'd held in awe for many years. Well, the show began, and the girls went out and sang their songs. Then they went back to their dressing room to change while Stevie Wonder went on as the main attrac-

tion. After a while, they heard the applause and crowd noises that signalled the end of the show. And suddenly there was a knock on their door, and a man burst into their room. It was Stevie Wonder. For a moment, the girls got flustered. . . because they weren't dressed. And then they realized. . . that it didn't make any difference. . . because Stevie is blind. Well, when Stevie and the girls finished laughing about that, Stevie explained that he loved their singing, and he wanted to meet them. Then he stepped up to the girls, one by one, and ran his hands gently over their faces. . . to 'see' what they looked like. Then he broke into that well-known Stevie Wonder smile. And he said, 'I knew it; you're as beautiful as you sound.' And the Hutchinson sisters—who call themselves the Emotions—were so moved by that, they sat down and cried. It isn't every act that has a superstar for a fan. This week, their tandem hit with Earth, Wind & Fire moves up a notch to #9."

Well, there you have what Casey Kassim said. To most people it probably tugged the heart strings and made a nice little human interest story. But to many it was a sugar coated drip, drip, drip. And it was not true to life—at least as most of us who are blind know and live it. How many Federationists who heard that program took the time to get the address and write a protest? That's what our movement is all about—letting people know what we are, and also what we are not.

U.S. SUPREME COURT AVOIDS THE TRAGESER CASE

by CHARLES BROWN

(Editor's Note: Charles S. Brown is a lawyer and is President of the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia.)

Last June, a shadow was cast over the future of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as the courageous struggle of

Novella Trageser to seek court redress in her employment discrimination case came to a discouraging conclusion before the

Supreme Court of the United States. By a 7 to 2 vote, the Supreme Court decided not to hear Mrs. Trageser's appeal in her lawsuit against a Richmond Nursing home (*Trageser v. Libbie Rehabilitation Center*). By taking this action—or non-action—the Court let stand an earlier ruling by the U.S. Court case. The *Trageser* case has important implications for blind and handicapped people seeking equal employment opportunity. The Court of Appeals stated the relevant facts of the case as follows:

"Trageser, a registered nurse, was hired in 1971 [by the Libbie Rehabilitation Center] and promoted to director of nurses in 1975. Her sight is impaired by a condition known as retinitis pigmentosa, which is hereditary and progressive.

"On April 28, 1976, the certification officer from the Virginia Department of Health conducted a regular inspection of the nursing home. The inspector told the administrator of the last inspection and asked what the home intended to do about it. [The inspector did not include any comment on Mrs. Trageser's eyesight or job performance in his official report.] The administrator reported [the inspector's] comments to the board of directors [of the home]. At its meeting on June 7, 1976, the board resolved to dismiss her. Upon learning of this decision, Trageser resigned."

The courts treated this "resignation" as tantamount to a dismissal. After being forced out, Mrs. Trageser, a Federationist, sued her former employer for reinstatement, backpay, etc. She alleged, among other things, that the nursing home had discriminated against her in violation of Section 504, but the U.S. District Court dismissed her case. She then appealed to the Court of Appeals and asked for the Federation's help. On November 9, 1977, the NFB (and the NFB of Virginia) offi-

cially entered the case by filing an *amicus curiae* ("friend of the court") brief for Mrs. Trageser's behalf. (This was reported in the March 1978 *Monitor* in an article entitled "Progress in Virginia; Victory in the Magnolia Lyons Case.") The United States Department of Justice also entered the case on Mrs. Trageser's side as an *amicus curiae*.

Her appeal was dismissed by the Court of Appeals on December 18, 1978, and, as previously noted, last June the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the Appeals Court decision to stand. No written opinions were filed, but Justices Stewart and Marshall let it be known that they would like to have heard Mrs. Trageser's appeal.

The Supreme Court's vote in the *Trageser* case was announced within a week of the case of *Southeastern Community College v. Davis* (discussed in an article by Peggy Pinder in the July/August 1978 *Monitor* entitled "First Supreme Court Ruling on Section 504; Implications for the Blind"). While the *Davis* and *Trageser* cases both involved the nursing profession, the facts and legal issues were otherwise very different.

The *Davis* case involved a college's failure to accept a deaf nursing student. Unlike the *Trageser* case, employment discrimination was not the main issue. Further, while Davis was admittedly unable to perform all of the required duties, there were no allegations that Mrs. Trageser was unable to perform her duties satisfactorily. Unlike Ms. Davis, Mrs. Trageser was not seeking special accommodation.

Since the Supreme Court's failure to hear Mrs. Trageser's appeal had the effect of allowing the Court of Appeals decision against her to stand, it is important to look carefully at the Court of Appeals decision.

As noted previously, the *Trageser* case involved the interpretation of Section 504

of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 basically prohibits discrimination against the handicapped in programs receiving Federal financial assistance. The nursing home involved received both Medicare and Medicaid funds. It has been the position of the Federation that persons discriminated against in violation of Section 504 should have the right to bring private court suits in employment discrimination and other Section 504 cases, in addition to the right to use HEW's administrative procedures. It is especially ironic that when Mrs. Trageser began her court suit, HEW had not yet promulgated the regulations necessary to implement Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act.

The Federal Appeals Court, however, ruled that there is no right to bring a private lawsuit based on employment discrimination under Section 504. In reaching this conclusion, the Court relied on the 1978 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. The 1978 amendment states that:

"The remedies, procedures, and rights set forth in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 shall be available to any person aggrieved by any act or failure to act by any recipient of Federal assistance or Federal provider of such assistance under (section) 504 of this Act."

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act permits private lawsuits involving issues of discrimination against minorities in federally-assisted programs. However, Title VI does not apply to employment, except where providing employment opportunities is a primary objective of the Federal financial assistance. The providing of employment was obviously not the primary purpose of the Medicare and Medicaid funding involved in the Trageser case. The reason that Title VI does not generally apply to employment discrimination in federally-as-

sisted programs is to prevent overlap with Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act which does deal with employment discrimination. Thus, while other minority group members may not be able to bring an employment discrimination court case under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, they can bring such cases under Title VIII. According to the Fourth Circuit Appeals Court decision, this is not the case for the blind and handicapped. For the court reasoned that even though the 1978 amendments did not actually say that Section 504 claimants could *only* have the rights and remedies provided under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, that is what the Court thought Congress must have meant. By putting this Title VI language and a provision dealing with employment rights of Federal employees into the 1978 amendments, the Court reasoned that Congressional failure to specifically include a reference to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act indicated that Congress did not intend that handicapped individuals have a right to bring court actions involving equal employment opportunity in federally-supported programs. Presumably, if it wanted to secure such rights Congress could have done so in the 1978 amendments. Of course, the Court might have chosen to rule, with equal force, that the failure to include a reference to Title VII simply indicated that Congress may have seen no need to add new language to the 1973 Act to establish a right to bring private lawsuits in employment discrimination cases under Section 504 that it may have thought was already protected. However, the Appeals Court ruled the other way and the Supreme Court ducked the issue for now.

It seems to me that the *Trageser* case has the following implications for blind people with respect to the future of Section 504.

First, for the most part, blind and handicapped individuals discriminated against

in employment will not be able to sue for redress in the courts, at least in the area covered by the jurisdiction of the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, and in other areas that may follow their lead. Further, while the Supreme Court's failure to take jurisdiction in the *Trageser* case does not technically mean that it agrees with the Fourth Circuit Appeals Court, there is, at least, a warning of what might be expected from the Supreme Court if they should later decide to hear an appeal in a similar case.

Second, if blind and handicapped individuals are denied access to the courts under Section 504 in employment discrimination cases we will have to rely solely on the time-consuming administrative procedures established by the Department of HEW, which do not always provide adequate redress.

Third, the *Trageser* case strongly emphasizes the need to obtain passage of legislation which will once and for all provide full coverage of blind and handicapped individuals under the equal employment opportunity provisions contained in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act—not just in federally-assisted programs, but throughout the economy. It should be noted that Federation-supported legislation that would accomplish this objective is now under consideration in the United States Senate. The bill is number S.446.

In its article on the *Trageser* case, the *Washington Post* described the Supreme Court's action as a "major blow to handicapped persons", and indeed it is. But, we as Federationists know how to do whatever is necessary to see to the eventful solution of the problems that beset us.

THE BLIND AND DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE, ANOTHER NFB VICTORY

by HAROLD SNIDER

The comedienne, Lilly Tomlin, is famous for a sketch about the telephone company in which a customer is hassled, threatened and bullied into submission by a phone company representative. And indeed this has sometimes been the experience of the blind as we have tried to negotiate with the telephone companies across the country. But when we act in an organized manner, profiting from our gains and losses in other parts of the country, even the giant monolith of Ma Bell must hear our call and is compelled to answer. The following account of events in the District of Columbia should be of help to Federationists across the country, just as the earlier victories in directory assistance (such as those in Kansas and Vermont) were of benefit to the blind in the Nation's Capitol.

In 1977, the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company (C & P) petitioned the District of Columbia Public Service Commission for the right to charge for directory assistance. As the representative of the National Federation of the Blind of the District of Columbia, I presented both written and oral testimony to the Public Service Commission in D.C. I was cross-examined by attorneys from the telephone company. During cross-examination I was grilled about the fact that I had given testimony against Southern Bell of Florida in 1975 on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind of Florida. The phone company tried to prove that I was a known agitator against them and that my testimony should be discounted. It was interesting that the Public Service Commission refused

to allow that question in evidence as it was not considered proper to the matter at hand. The American Telephone and Telegraph Company would like everyone to believe that they are not one big corporation, but a bunch of small companies—just home folks. However, their questioning proves that they keep centralized records in order to attack anyone who testifies against them anywhere in the country. So, as Lilly Tomlin says in her sketch, "This is the telephone company, we are omnipotent."

Summarizing our position for an exemption from directory assistance charges I made the following points:

1. Blind persons should not have to prove that they are blind to be exempt from directory assistance charges. The burden of proof should rest with the phone company. A certification system based on presumptive blindness should be established. A person wishing to be exempt from directory assistance charges merely states that he or she is blind. If the phone company has some doubt about validity, it must prove that the customer is not blind, rather than requiring the customer to present letters from doctors or agencies.

2. The telephone company must negotiate with the National Federation of the Blind and must recognize the right of the National Federation of the Blind to speak on behalf of blind persons and to assist them in securing exemption from directory assistance charges which may be imposed.

3. We believe that persons rather than telephone lines should be exempt from directory assistance charges. It is not good enough simply to exempt the blind person's home phone, but rather the person's use of directory assistance must be exempt from charges. Therefore, business lines must be exempted as well as home lines and the phone company must issue a credit card which would permit blind persons to make

free directory assistance calls from any telephone. This means that no extra burden would be placed on the actual or potential employers of blind persons because the blind employee needs to use directory assistance. It also means that the blind can have as much freedom as the sighted in access to telephone information on the basis of equally effective treatment.

After presentation of oral and written testimony in January and June 1978, the D.C. Public Service Commission entered into negotiations with the National Federation of the Blind of D.C. when preparing language for the order allowing the C&P Telephone Company to charge for directory assistance. As you will see from the following section of that order we were successful in our efforts and we got all the provisions we requested.

DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE CHARGING PLAN IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

STATEMENT OF PROCEDURE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE EXEMPTION FOR PHYSICALLY OR VISUALLY HANDICAPPED CUSTOMERS

General

Customers who are physically unable to use the telephone book will not be charged for calls to directory assistance to obtain listings. This exemption applies not only to their residence phone but also to any other phone in the District of Columbia they may use while away from home.

Procedure

Handicapped customers unable to use the telephone directory should call the Telephone Company Business Office to make arrangements to be exempted from the charges.

The business office will mail a form to be signed by the customer and returned which will establish the exemption. Only the signed statement of the customer will be required. The Telephone Company will also accept lists of handicapped customers furnished by reputable groups such as the National Federation of the Blind, as a substitute for individual written notification from each affected member.

The residential telephone service of handicapped customers who are identified to the business office will be arranged so that calls made to 411 will not be billed. Those handicapped customers who indicate a need to use other telephones when away from their residence will be provided with a credit card so that these calls may be made without charge.

Handicapped persons using credit cards will be instructed to dial zero and give the operator the credit card number when they ask for directory assistance. The operator will put the call through to directory assistance and no charge will be made. Since calls from coin telephones are exempted from the charge, handicapped customers using coin telephones need not use the credit card. They should dial 411 to reach directory assistance from coin telephones.

Informing Customers

Bill inserts will be employed both before implementation and with the first bills after the DA charging is in effect. In addition to describing the plan, these bill inserts will instruct handicapped customers to call the business office.

Advertising by local newspapers and radio will include this instruction for obtaining exemptions for handicapped customers also.

Material explaining the charging plan and procedures for obtaining exemptions will be made available to groups which deal with handicapped individuals, so that they too may disseminate this information through their channels.

The National Federation of the Blind was the only organization of or for the blind or handicapped which testified at all before the D.C. Public Service Commission on directory assistance charges. It is significant that we are cited specifically as an organization in the implementation procedures for the order. No other organization is mentioned. One might ask where was the ACB and what about the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind? Were they as usual too busy hiding their heads in the sand (ignoring the real problems of blind people) or were they too busy trying to destroy our organization? But never mind them; what we did in this one instance helps all blind people, not just NFB members.

Once again, if anyone ever had any questions about the power, the strengths, and the reasons for the National Federation of the Blind, let them look to this victory. It is important that our affiliates demand the right to negotiate with the phone company and with their state public service commissions. Affiliates should demand the right of exemption of blind persons rather than phone lines, and we must all continue to press for a national credit card system which would exempt all blind persons from directory assistance charges everywhere. Use our example in Washington D.C. to win against an omnipotent telephone company which would otherwise like to control us. This is another reason why we are the National Federation of the Blind.

BRAILLE: A COMEDY OR A TRAGEDY?

by RAMONA WALHOF

There is a play by William Shakespeare called "A Comedy of Errors," and the play lives up to its title. I am reminded of this play when I am confronted with attitudes toward Braille and all the problems—real and unreal—that are attributed to Braille. But there is an important difference. The misconceptions and misdirections that cause the use of Braille to be shrinking instead of expanding are not in the least bit funny. And this is happening at a time when technology exists to produce Braille in more ways than ever before.

We are told that libraries for the blind have very few borrowers who use Braille. Because there are so few, the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress has decided that fewer libraries should circulate Braille. Four multi-state centers will have complete Braille collections. Some other libraries will have a little Braille; and some, none at all. This means that a Braille book which is located in the multi-state centers can only be circulated after substantial delay. Furthermore, it means that librarians and their staffs who receive requests for books will not generally know whether or not the books are available and when. It is and must be an inefficient way to circulate books. In addition, the library network for the blind as it currently exists is largely staffed or understaffed with individuals who have little or no training or experience in library service. In many libraries for the blind the philosophy has been and continues to be one of providing a charity, rather than giving service. Of course, charities often do give valuable service. However, the philosophy does not foster consistently good service.

In other words, in a system that is strug-

gling to handle a growing work load to provide library service to the blind and physically handicapped, a system which often cannot do what is needed to serve many of the individuals who need and want this service, Braille has been pushed aside. The multi-state centers in theory may make more books available to more people. In reality, they are cumbersome to use and many borrowers do not know how to use them. Numerous regional—and especially subregional—library staff members do not really know how to use multi-state centers. It is not surprising that the circulation of Braille has not been helped by this system.

When people ask me how to get Braille materials on a regular basis, I recommend Braille magazines. Of course, this does not solve the problem described above. However, it should be noted that it is possible to receive Braille magazines regularly and that these magazines are generally good quality Braille. Many Braille readers read primarily magazines because it is so difficult to get at other materials.

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and the Network of Regional Libraries have not caused the problems with Braille. They have only made a contribution to them. Like others in our society, many of the libraries have accepted the prevailing attitudes toward blindness and Braille in society and reacted to them.

The beginnings of the problems pertaining to Braille go back farther than Braille itself. In fact, they stem from attitudes toward blindness with which all of us are familiar, the attitude that says any methods used by a blind person must be inferior to a method that involves the use of eyesight. We know that this attitude is false. Blind

people have been victims of this kind of thinking since the beginning of recorded history. This is the greatest problem facing blind Americans today. I suppose it would be surprising if it had not had far-reaching effects on Braille, since Braille is one of the principal tools of the blind.

Reading and writing print is a system intended to be used by persons who can see the lines and loops made with ink on the page. It is a good system. Reading and writing Braille makes use of a different pathway for information to travel from a book to the brain. Reading and writing dots is a system designed for the fingertips. The fact that fewer people use Braille does not necessarily make it inferior to or slower than print. Anymore than the fact that fewer people speak Greek than Chinese could be taken to indicate that Greek is a less good language than Chinese. In fact, Braille users who have had the opportunity to become good readers and writers read rapidly and well and write rapidly and well with the Braille writer and the slate and stylus.

There are reasons why many blind individuals do not read and write Braille well, just as there are reasons why many sighted people do not read and write print well. Some of the reasons are the same. But attitudes toward Braille reduce drastically the number of students who really have the opportunity to learn it well and there are very few teachers indeed who believe Braille to be the excellent means of reading and writing by touch that it is.

Back in the 1930's and 1940's blind children largely attended schools for the blind and learned to read Braille and write with a slate and stylus. By the time I started to school in 1950, things were beginning to change.

1. Somebody came up with the idea of large print (sight saving). Blind children who could not read small print but had

some limited sight were taught to read large print. This was considered (although nobody said it quite this way) more respectable than Braille. It meant that these children would not be able to read much besides textbooks, since textbooks were about all that was produced in large print. After graduating from high school, some of these "sight savers" would be unable to read anything.

2. Recorded materials were becoming more and more available. Never mind that you couldn't learn to spell from a tape, you couldn't read charts from a tape, that math could be taught best in Braille or in print. More and more children found themselves in situations that required them to rely on recorded materials for textbooks and everything else. Children who could read large print might rely on tape recordings, but not Braille. They didn't know Braille. Some children had to rely on recorded materials primarily throughout school.

My purpose here is not to underrate records and tapes. I fully appreciate their value in increasing the amount of material available to the average blind person, but they should be a supplement to Braille. Blind children should never be forced to rely primarily on recorded material from the beginning to the end of their education.

3. By the time I started to school, first and second graders were no longer able (according to the teachers) to learn to write using a slate and stylus. Braille writers were beginning to be more widely available. Since it was quicker to teach a child to write Braille with a Braille writer this became the practice. The more Braille writers available, the longer a school could wait to start teaching students to write with a slate and stylus.

I have often wondered if it wouldn't be quicker to teach sighted children to type

than to write print and cursive. I suspect it would be. But for some reason, nobody ever tried teaching typing in first grade, leaving print and cursive for some other time. Could it be that blind children are also still able to learn to write with the slate and stylus in first grade? Or could it be that blind children could begin to handle a slate and stylus as pre-schoolers, just as sighted children begin to handle pencils long before they start to school?

I am told that first graders cannot learn to use the slate and stylus because it is so confusing to write the letters backwards. Most of the slate writers I know never knew they wrote letters backwards on the slate unless someone told them so. After all, you read letters, words, lines and sentences from the beginning to the end, just as we write them from the beginning to the end on the slate, and on the Braille writer, in cursive and on the typewriter.

For my part, I grew impatient and did not wish to wait until third grade to learn to write with a slate and stylus. That would have meant that I would not have been able to write Braille at home, since I had no Braille writer. Therefore, I "borrowed" an older child's slate and stylus and taught myself to use it. It seemed very reasonable to start at the right-hand end of the slate and write in progression from the beginning to the end of the line. An [a] and an [l] are on the first side of the cell, whether reading or writing. An [o] and an [h] have a middle dot on the second side of the cell to distinguish them from a [k] and a [b].

Very few children now have the opportunity to develop good writing skills on the slate and stylus. It's not that they couldn't or wouldn't. Braille teachers do not seem to consider the slate and stylus important and appropriate for daily use as a writing tool. In some ways, this is hard to explain. However, I think the explanation has to do with

teacher training and attitudes toward Braille.

4. Teachers' attitudes toward Braille make it difficult for children to receive a good foundation in Braille reading and writing. I recently talked with a teacher of blind students who had a master's degree in education of blind children from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. He told me that he had learned in college that one of the reasons for teaching children with partial vision to read large print is because, no matter how difficult it is for a child to read large print, that child is likely to read print better than Braille. His belief was that the average Braille reading speed was 50-70 words per minute. I asked him if he thought this included the reading speeds of people who learned Braille, but had never used it much. He thought that was possible. When I introduced him to several individuals who could read more rapidly than they could talk, he wondered how it was possible that he could have such a low opinion of Braille. I was glad he wondered. I suggested that it would have been beneficial to him, his fellow students in college, and the children he was teaching if some effort had been made to give him accurate information about Braille. He agreed enthusiastically. I have talked with other teachers of children and adults who had similar misinformation about Braille reading and writing.

One resource teacher—who received a degree from a different university—called me and said, "A fifth grade student of mine does not like to work with the slate and stylus. I think this child should learn this skill. I understand that it takes work. What should I tell him to do?" The teacher also told me that she did not feel she wrote well with the slate and stylus. She was trying to teach a skill she did not possess. I suggested she introduce the child to a blind adult in

the community who could use the slate and stylus well. This made a marked difference in the child's interest in the slate and stylus. I also suggested to the teacher that a child who found math difficult would be encouraged to do more math, instead of less, in order to improve his or her skill in mathematics.

Often newly blinded adults are encouraged to believe that they cannot ever hope to learn Braille well enough to use it a great deal and well. These newly blinded individuals quite reasonably assume their teachers and counselors know what they're talking about. In this case, many clients are misled. Fortunately, the truth is that most newly-blinded adults could learn to read and write Braille well.

When I taught newly-blinded adults to read Braille, I told them, "It is not convenient to have to learn a new way of reading and writing as an adult, but it can be done. If you are motivated to spend the time it takes to build a new skill, you can hope to read Braille at two hundred words a minute or more. Furthermore, if you make yourself do it, you can take notes with the slate and stylus in college or on the job as rapidly as anyone can take notes in print." And, quite a few students did just that.

5. Not only are attitudes among Braille teachers who teach children and adults often harmful to the skill they are teaching, but many blind individuals never have an opportunity to learn Braille at all. Some of the reasons for this have been mentioned above (large print, tape recordings, attitudes). Of course, mainstreaming has also had an effect, but mainstreaming need not prevent children from learning Braille.

Adults receive even less encouragement and fewer opportunities to learn Braille than children. A newly-blinded adult, with rare exceptions, will need to teach Braille to himself or herself. This requires high moti-

vation at a time when a person is generally frustrated and confused about blindness. Of course, it is possible to function without Braille. But reading and writing for oneself is a skill which most people want. They also want to be encouraged, not discouraged, to seek this skill and to believe in its value.

6. A few people—largely Nonbraille users—tell us that Braille is very difficult to learn because of the contractions. There is nothing sacred about the Braille code. If changes are needed, let them be made. However, let's not insult today's children and newly-blinded adults by assuming they can't learn the system. Braille is no more difficult to learn than dozens of other skills. Furthermore, it is no more difficult to learn than it was 20 or 40 years ago.

If certain rules ought to be changed in order to cheapen or speed up production of Braille using today's technology, by all means, let it be considered. Let us do it carefully, taking into consideration input from producers of Braille and consumers who read and write Braille. Let us draw upon the knowledge of those who understand technology. Since Braille is currently effective for those who use it, let us seek to make as few changes as possible. In other words, if certain minor changes in the Braille system would make it possible to have more Braille available, to reduce the costs of producing Braille, and/or to shorten the time it takes to make Braille materials available to readers, then Braille readers will stand together and help to do it. Since the Braille system is currently a good one, let us make changes only after careful consideration and for good reasons.

Our attitudes toward the things we do and do not do well, to a very large degree, cause us to succeed or to fail. This is not a complicated or advanced bit of psychology. It is recognized by almost everyone. Although many teachers and students of

Braille do not think in these terms, they consider Braille less respectable and less efficient than print. As far as I am concerned, the shortcomings of Braille are: 1. There isn't enough material available; 2. Hundreds of teachers sell Braille short to their students. These are serious shortcomings. The solutions lie in better teaching methods, together with more production and better circulation of Braille materials.

The April, 1979 Braille Research Newsletter published by the Warwick (England) Research Unit for the Blind and the American Foundation for the Blind was entirely devoted to a discussion of Braille and its problems, "The Future of Braille" by Leslie L. Clark. Ms. Clark lists a series of studies that should be undertaken to determine the best paths to follow to maintain and expand the use of Braille in the future. She makes the error which is now so common among agencies which purport to serve the blind. She proposes to survey everybody except organizations of consumers.

It is well known to *Monitor* readers that, if asked to do so, the National Federation of the Blind could and would be glad to designate someone with vast experience in Braille to work with others on Braille, as on other matters pertaining to blindness. It would, of course, be necessary that all parties come to any such project in good faith. Such a person would have input from 50,000 or more blind individuals from all over the country. There are those among us—and we know who they are—who have a kind of experience with Braille that can be

acquired in no other way than by long and active participation in the National Federation of the Blind.

I do not mean to suggest that a lot of surveys are necessary. We need to evaluate new methods of producing Braille, and the Federation is actively participating in this. However, the effectiveness of Braille reading and writing, methods for teaching children and adults, methods for training teachers of Braille and methods for circulating Braille books do not need to be surveyed. There is plenty of experience and knowledge in these areas available in the National Federation of the Blind. If anyone would like to make use of it—and we wish they would—let them come and look for it.

Braille continues to be the excellent means of reading and writing by touch it has been for the last century and a half. Neither tape recorders nor computers can replace Braille nor decrease the need for it. They may change the uses and production of Braille somewhat, just as recorded materials and computers have affected the methods of handling print. The need for Braille is great. The problems are well-known. The challenge for us is to stand together and speak out. When we (the tens of thousands of blind Americans who comprise the National Federation of the Blind) speak together through the pages of the *Monitor*, we will be heard. This is what Federationism and the Federation is all about. It is why we have organized and why we have made such progress.

"A GUIDE FOR GUIDEPOSTS"

Barbara Pierce chairs our National Public Relations Committee. She is also one of the leaders of the NFB of Ohio. Besides all of that, she has a vibrant enthusiasm for

life, a vitality and joy which lead to broad perspective and clear understanding.

The December, 1979, issue of *Guideposts* magazine carried an article which troubled

Barbara. The letter she wrote to the editors is one that all of us would do well to ponder. It is not harsh or acerbic, but this does not take away from its firmness or urgency. It is a commentary on the battles and decisions which necessarily occupy our daily attention:

January 16, 1980

To The Editors of *Guideposts* Magazine

Dear Friends:

I am writing to you out of my distress at reading the article in the December issue of *Guideposts*, "The Woman Who Dared Not Cry," written by Charlotte Sanford. It is not my intention to try to change editorial decisions. That would be futile. My hope is rather that several people on your staff will read my letter and that my point of view will be incorporated into their understanding of blindness and therefore into their attitude toward future pieces that may be submitted.

Let me begin by saying that tears came to my eyes as I read the woman's description of seeing her children. I am delighted that, wanting her sight so badly, she did receive it. I have searched myself as thoroughly as I can, and I find not one scrap of envy that she now has vision, and I do not.

And yet there was a time when reading that article would have left me depressed for days, not because it happened to her and not me, but because of the very clear attitude which the article conveys that to be blind is somehow to be diminished, second-rate, less adequate. Without doubt the author felt herself to be all these things as a blind woman. That is a fact, clearly expressed in almost every sentence. This is unfortunate and unnecessary, but there is nothing to be done about it. The depressing problem facing me and all other responsible blind people is that her attitude is

shared by almost the whole sighted public, and articles like hers reinforce the fear, prejudice, and inadvertent discrimination which arise from such an attitude. People think, without even knowing that they are thinking it, "There is a blind woman talking about blindness, and she should know what she is talking about. Being blind must be every bit as bad as I always thought it would be."

Sixty-five percent of all blind people are above the age of fifty-five. Most of them spent the greater part of their lives as sighted people, reading articles like this one in which the only happy ending can be the regaining of the lost sight, and coming to the conclusion that blindness is a kind of living death which at best may be endured with God's grace.

I am writing to tell you that it's not like that any more, or at least it doesn't have to be. But in order to let you understand, I must tell you a little about myself. I lost my sight gradually through my childhood. My parents couldn't believe that God intended this thing to happen to a child, and they pursued every avenue that medical science or faith healing could offer. A child pays a heavy price during years of this sort of thing when the prayers seem not to be answered. I have come to the conclusion that God does heal in many ways, and I believe that He is capable of giving me sight this moment if that were in His plan for me. I would be delighted if it were. I think it is not.

I conclude this because I can see now that my parents' deepest prayer for my wholeness, my commitment to God, my willingness to do His will have been answered powerfully. And they have been answered as God so often answers our prayers, in a totally unexpected way. That is to say, my life has not been blighted by blindness. The discipline that blindness forced me

to learn trained my mind. I graduated Phi Beta Kappa from one of the finest colleges in the country. I married and have three beautiful children. Right now being a mother is the most important obligation in my life, but I have found part-time jobs, which have been interesting, have challenged me, and have given me a chance to prove to myself and the people around me that there is nothing second-rate about blindness or blind people. My Christian life has broadened and deepened through the years as well. My life and work are in God's hands, and there I am learning to leave them.

This sense of my own worth in God's eyes and my own has come to me during the past six years. It is the work of the National Federation of the Blind, an organization of blind people, including many deeply committed Christians. We in the NFB have come to see that it is respectable to be blind.

I believe that God does not intend for a single human life to be blighted. For some blind people this may in fact mean that His will is to give the gift of sight. But surely another way of achieving the same end is to metamorphose blindness so that it is not a blight. Neither alternative should be overlooked, but the NFB is virtually alone in working on the second.

You can help by understanding that blindness is not a diminishment. It can be an opportunity to learn and stretch in new ways, to listen to God and other people with new ears.

Thank you for reading this. I have written at God's prompting and leave this now in His hands and yours.

Yours in Christ,
Barbara Pierce
Public Relations Chairwoman
National Federation of the
Blind

JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BLIND

A Cooperative Effort by the
U.S. Department of Labor and the National Federation of the Blind

by RAMONA WALHOF
Administrative Assistant JOB

Job Opportunities for the Blind (JOB for short) is an attempt on the part of the National Federation of the Blind to improve employment opportunities for blind persons, to create a better climate among employers for employing blind people, and to help blind persons in all the details of learning about and securing jobs. To this end the National Federation of the Blind is assisting the Department of Labor in publicizing job opportunities which can and should be available to blind persons but which ordinarily have not been.

The reasons why job opportunities have not been available to the blind and why blind persons have not sought and found employment in the main channels of the job market are the very reasons why JOB has come into being. We want to increase awareness on the part of employers; we want to see that blind persons know of job opportunities throughout the country; and we want to assist blind persons in acquiring the technical know-how to find the jobs, qualify for them, and actually get them. Employment—work—productivity. This is

what JOB is all about: thus, the name—JOB, Job Opportunities for the Blind.

This is indeed an exciting project, which is being directed by Mr. Duane Gerstenberger. Mr. Gerstenberger is known to *Monitor* readers as an active member of the NFB: the man in the exhibit room at national conventions. As head of the library at the Iowa Commission for the Blind, Mr. Gerstenberger became a real leader in work with the blind. He is now doing excellent work as director of JOB.

One person in each state has been asked to be the JOB Coordinator for that state. He or she will be receiving on a periodic basis bulletins on cassette. These bulletins will tell about job openings throughout the country and will give other information to be passed onto other blind persons. From time to time we will also be sending the volunteer coordinators recorded editions of relevant material produced by or for the Department of Labor.

We will be in touch with the JOB Coordinators on a continuing basis to talk about the specific things they can do, to give them further information and seek input from them.

It will be important for those who are seeking new employment to keep in close touch with the volunteer coordinators in each state or with JOB headquarters. Sometimes positions that are open are filled rapidly, while others stay open for weeks or months. We will include the most up-to-date information we have in each cassette issue of the JOB Bulletin. We are asking volunteer coordinators to send information about job openings of which they become aware to JOB headquarters, and we are receiving a great many announcements about work opportunities all over the country. JOB headquarters can supply detailed information about specific types of employment to blind job applicants.

We need to hear from any blind person who wishes assistance in seeking employment. If you wish to take advantage of the services of JOB, write us at Job Opportunities for the Blind, 1800 Johnson Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21230 or telephone us at our toll-free in-wats number 1-800-638-7518. Our local telephone number is (301) 659-9314. We need the following information:

Name

Address

Phone

Educational Background

Work Experience

Job Preference

Other: (e.g. area of the country interested in)

How did they learn of JOB

If you have a resume including training and education and work experience, please send it to us. JOB can provide better services if we have complete information about job applicants. It is important to indicate more than one kind of position in which you are interested, if you would accept employment of different types. We will be guided primarily by the wishes of job applicants, so we need to know as much about you as possible.

We are distributing information on cassette about jobs which are open in all parts of the country to regional libraries for the blind, as well as to JOB coordinators, in order to get the information to blind people who need it. We are also producing a "JOB Bulletin; Deaf-Blind Edition" in Braille and distributing it to deaf-blind people.

We will give priority to helping blind individuals who are not now working. However, any blind person who is working but believes he or she is under-employed or simply wishes to make a change should feel free to contact JOB.

Job Opportunities for the Blind also provides other services.

We are producing materials on cassette and/or in Braille that will be helpful to prospective job applicants. We are producing a JOB Bulletin for employers that will include information about blindness, jobs blind people are doing and blind people seeking work. We produce some of these materials at the request of the Department of Labor and we are looking for other relevant and effective materials. We are distributing these materials free of charge to people who need them.

JOB has produced ten public service radio announcements that demonstrate the potential of the blind to do a great variety of work. These announcements include information about laws and regulations that affect employment of the blind, and they have been distributed to radio stations throughout the country.

We will be conducting three seminars for job applicants who are blind. The purpose of these seminars will be to assist the participants in job search skills and to give them an in-depth knowledge of regulations affecting employment of the blind and other resources available to blind job applicants and blind employees.

We will hold workshops for prospective employers and other personnel responsible for hiring. These workshops will deal with the same matters to be discussed in seminars for job applicants, and in addition, these workshops will seek to give employers

a better understanding of what blindness is and what it isn't. We believe that providing the opportunity to employers to learn about blind employees will benefit thousands of blind individuals now and in years to come, as well as, helping the employers find good employees.

If there is an event in your state or area for which you wish to draw on the resources of JOB, please do not hesitate to contact us.

JOB can make suggestions to blind job applicants and to employers that may result in employment of blind individuals. The JOB staff has the benefit of the accumulated experience of thousands of blind individuals who have sought and found employment. We are familiar with the concerns and questions of employers who have never hired blind persons. We have found that these concerns and questions can often be answered to the satisfaction of employers.

The Job Opportunities Program for the Blind can be an important, effective vehicle for opening new positions to blind individuals, for helping blind applicants to get jobs and for helping employers learn of the abilities of the blind.

Members of the National Federation of the Blind have wished for a national referral and support service for blind job applicants for many years. We are indeed excited about the Job Opportunities for the Blind Program. It is a big step forward toward our goal of equal employment opportunities for blind Americans.

"CRAIG KISER GETS IMPORTANT PROMOTION"

(Editor's Note by Kenneth Jernigan: Those of you who attended the banquet at the national convention last summer in Florida will remember that Gerald Lewis, the State Comptroller, was present. He was accompanied by Craig Kiser, one of our Florida members and a former Iowan.

As the following article indicates, Craig did not accept his blindness easily. When I first knew him, he was both bitter and defensive. That is not an unusual situation. After all, that was what our Orientation Center at the Iowa Commission for the Blind was all about—helping people come to grips with their blindness. In his first days at the Iowa Center Craig and I had some knock down, drag out conflicts. It is putting it mildly to say that he hated my guts.

Today, Craig is an eminently successful lawyer; he is a staunch member of the National Federation of the Blind and he and I are close friends and colleagues. It is with pleasure that the Monitor reprints the following article from the St. Petersburg Times for January 18, 1980. Similar coverage was given to the story by the media throughout the state.

As President of the National Federation of the Blind and as one who worked closely with Craig during those painful days when he was trying to find himself, I am especially pleased at his promotion. Craig, the blind of the nation are proud of you. You exemplify our strivings for first-class citizenship and our struggle to be free and self-respecting human beings.)

Promotion a milestone for blind lawyer

by VIRGINIA ELLIS

St. Petersburg Times Staff Writer
(reprinted with permission)

TALLAHASSEE—From all appearances, the three-paragraph press release distributed by Comptroller Gerald Lewis' office Thursday had the markings of a routine promotion.

It simply noted somewhat dryly that S. Craig Kiser had been promoted to the job of general counsel—chief lawyer—for the department of banking and finance.

BUT WHAT the press release didn't say, and what made its contents extraordinary, is that S. Craig Kiser is blind.

Nor did it mention that by his promotion, Kiser probably became the only blind person in the country—and certainly in Florida—holding such a statewide position.

And it didn't point out that in less than

three years, Kiser, 33, has risen from a \$17,000-a-year job as a low-level lawyer in Lewis' department to the position of deputy general counsel and finally to the \$32,400-a-year general counsel's post.

For Kiser, who struggled for years to accept his blindness, it was a pleasant milestone.

"I don't want to be immodest," he said, "but I really do think, blind or not, that I've accomplished a lot."

KISER HAD JUST celebrated his promotion with three phone calls: one to his wife Gail who used to read his law books out loud to him so he could get through law school; a second to his father, who pushed him to get training for the blind; and finally, to Kenneth Jernigan, who finally made him accept his blindness.

Kiser was 19 when doctors discovered what made him miss fly balls on the Little League field or run into things at night that other people could see. They called it reti-

nitis pigmentosa, a pigment on the eye retina that slowly destroys the rods in the eye that govern peripheral and night vision.

They told him he would always be able to see light, but soon he would be able to see little else.

FOR MONTHS, Kiser refused to accept the news. When legally blind, he continued to drive a car. He tried to enter the University of Iowa as a sighted person, only to flunk out when he couldn't see well enough to read.

Finally, he went to a school for the blind headed by Jernigan, only to be kicked out when he continued to try to lead the life of a sighted person. The final straw for Jernigan was when Kiser started leading the rest

of the blind student body bar-hopping at night.

Once out of school, Kiser found he really couldn't function without training for the blind. A month later Jernigan agreed to take him back, if Kiser would agree to accept his blindness.

From that point on, Kiser became one of the school's top students, entered college, obtained a bachelor's degree and ultimately became the first blind student at Florida State University's law school.

"ALL OF US always knew he would do well once he came to grips with his blindness," his brother, House Minority Leader Curtis Kiser, recalled Thursday. "We knew once he got channeled in the right direction there would be no stopping him."

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

by LINDA MILLER

SPICE TEA MIX

Ingredients

1 cup instant tea
2 cups Tang
1½ to 2 cups sugar

1 teaspoon cloves
1 teaspoon cinnamon

Mix together. Use by the tablespoon in cup of hot water.

MONITOR MINIATURES

□ As *Monitor* readers know, Herbert Anderson, Iowa's dynamic Insurance Commissioner, died of a sudden heart attack last year. He had worked with us (particularly with Jim Omvig) to eliminate insurance discrimination against the blind throughout the country. We now have a letter from his widow (Jodie) who writes:

"It is my desire to contribute \$1,000 to the National Federation of the Blind in

memory of my husband Herbert W. Anderson.

"He was interested in and sensitive to the problems and progress of those who are working for the blind in Iowa as well as in the nation.

"It seems so very appropriate to honor Herb by contributing to programs that will enrich the lives of others."

□ George West (First Vice President of the National Federation of the Blind of Wash-

ington and a vendor in that state) and Pat Epperson (one of the stalwart members of the NFB of Colorado) were married early in February. They will make their home in Seattle. We wish them much happiness and great joy in their life together.

□ Scott Lewis, President of the NFB of Washington, is a candidate for the legislature from the 36th legislative district, located in Seattle. Homer Page, one of the leaders of the NFB of Colorado, is also a candidate for the state legislature. Although we have had no official word, we would assume that Euclid Raines, President of the NFB of Alabama and currently a member of the legislature of that state, will seek reelection. Federationists are beginning to take an ever increasing part in the total life and affairs of the nation.

□ Peggy Pinder, a member of the National Board of Directors and a recent graduate of the Yale Law School, has now passed the Iowa Bar and is licensed to practice law in that state. As *Monitor* readers know, she was an Iowa delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1976 and made one of the seconding speeches for Senator Dole in his candidacy for the Vice Presidency. Peggy continues to be active in public affairs. Governor Robert Ray recently appointed her to membership on the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women.

□ Scott Lewis, President of the NFB of Washington, writes:

"Our minimum wage for the blind bill was introduced in the House of Representatives January 22, 1980, and referred to the Labor Committee. Hearings will be held next week, and the chairman of the Labor Committee is the bill's sponsor."

From Cheryl Finley:

The C.E.I.P. committee would like to invite each of you to join us in a tasting ad-

venture at the National convention in Minneapolis. This adventure will take place on Sunday, June 29, 1980 from 4:00 p.m. until 8:00. Tickets can be purchased from any committee member or by contacting Cheryl Finley, 318 1st St. NE, Clarion, Iowa, 50525, phone: 515-532-3319. Tickets are on sale for \$4.00 and the purchase of a ticket will let you taste three glasses of wine or pop and several pieces of cheese and assorted crackers.

This wine and cheese tasting party is an excellent way to start the National convention and help us raise funds for the movement. We hope to see all of you in Minneapolis on June 29 at the Wine and Cheese tasting party.

□ Judy Cook, Treasurer of the NFB of Louisiana, writes:

"John and I have a set of twin boys. They were born on August 24, 1979. They are four and one half months old and each weighs fifteen pounds."

□ From the Massachusetts Association for the Blind:

Program Director Community Services

Seek innovative and results oriented leader to administer a community services department budgeted at \$160,000 providing braille, taping, aids and appliances, volunteer and information/referral services.

Prefer experienced candidate with Masters Degree.

Submit resume to:
Massachusetts Association for the
Blind
200 Ivy Street
Brooklyn, Massachusetts 02146
ATTENTION: J. Ryder
Affirmative Action Employer

□ From: Melvin Martin
P. O. Box 375
Fort Smith, AR 72902

"The chapter of the Federation of the Blind in Fort Smith, Arkansas is challenging all other 49 states to a fundraising contest. The "Queen" contest requires that whoever wishes to enter be a legally blind female member of the NFB. Friends and

neighbors as well as other NFB members can give a one cent or more vote for them as a fundraising project for the NFB. Whoever raises the most money will be awarded the National Crown which will be presented at the National Convention in July, 1980. Other prizes are as yet to be determined.

"We would appreciate any comments or suggestions that you might have for us."

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